

"You shall not subjugate him with rigor and you shall fear your G-d... but over your brethren, Bnei Yisrael, one over another, you shall not rule with rigor." (25:45,46)

The second admonishment against treating slaves harshly seems redundant. Why was it necessary to repeat the same prohibition three *pesukim* later? The *Chasid Yaavetz* explains that since the *Torah* had previously stated that we may enslave the Canaanites, a distinct possibility exists that we may inadvertently begin to treat the Jewish slave like his Canaanite counterpart. The *Torah*, therefore, repeats its warning against mistreatment of the Jewish slave.

This statement is vexing. Are we to believe that one would unjustly mistreat a Jewish servant, because he is permitted to treat a Canaanite slave as he wishes? How does the treatment of one extend to the other?

The *Yaavetz* infers that every action leaves a lasting impression on a person. When one performs a deed, he is subconsciously bound to that deed. One who imposes his will on a Canaanite slave becomes inured to cruelty. Actions become indelibly etched upon a person's heart and mind, causing habit to become a predominant force in his nature.

The *Chasid Yaavetz* establishes his point based upon his commentary of the *Mishnah* in *Avos 1:16* which states, "*Do not estimate tithes.*" What is wrong with estimating the amount of *maaser* one must tithe? One will only end up giving more than he is required to make sure that he gave enough! We must surmise that habit becomes master. One who becomes complacent in doing things inaccurately, even in a positive light, will continue performing his every endeavor fallaciously. This erroneous attitude will affect everything he does.

The *Torah* is absolute and immutable. Its laws are presented in a clear and concise manner. They are not subject to speculation and estimate. One who permits himself to be lenient in areas which require exactitude will ultimately disparage *Torah's* precision. This is the crux of the problem. One who does not break his habit will become enslaved by it.